ADDENDUM:
YEOVIL PERIPHERAL LANDSCAPE STUDY
(FINAL REPORT)

30 AUGUST 2013
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1) Background to the addendum

1.1 A peripheral landscape study (PLS) to assess the capacity of Yeovil’s edge to accommodate additional development was undertaken in September 2008. Through an evaluation of the landscape and visual sensitivities of the town’s margin, its landscape capacity for growth was assessed and mapped (PLS fig. 5) to enable identification of potential development sites. The study concluded by reviewing the opportunities presented by the capacity study, for the town’s margins to accommodate a 5000-home urban extension, a scale of growth envisaged necessary by the RSS at that time.

1.2 The emerging South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) has since reviewed and revised that figure, and now proposes a single urban extension of 2500 homes, 1565 of which would be delivered within the plan period, with commensurate land for employment, educational, recreational, and community use, inclusive of an ‘eco-town’ standard of 40% open space. In terms of the land areas being sought, this broadly equates to 135-150ha. (figure advised by SSDC Policy). Alternatively, there may be potential for identifying a multi-site option, to deliver the plan requirement of 1565 homes, which would necessitate a total land area circa 100ha. being identified.

1.3 The examination hearing sessions of the local plan were undertaken during May and June 2013, and in July 2013 the Inspector published his preliminary findings. With specific reference to the landscape, the following matters were raised;
(a) the capacity of Yeovil’s periphery to accommodate an urban extension of 2500 dwellings should be re-appraised, and;
(b) noting that development impact is likely to be significant in whatever direction of growth the town takes, the potential to mitigate the likely resultant landscape and visual effects by utilising the 40% open space standard, to assist assimilation of an urban extension into its wider landscape context, requires evaluation.

1.4 In response, an addendum to the capacity study is undertaken here.
It will;
(i) consider the potential mitigation strategies available for application to the town’s edge, alongside the landscape sensitivity and capacity studies within the PLS, to;
(ii) identify potential study areas;
(iii) review each study area, to assess the potential impacts of major development; their likely landscape and visual effects; and general mitigation approaches that can be applied, drawing upon the 40% open space standard.
(iv) consistent with NPPF para 58, identify opportunities to enhance the landscape, and assimilate development into the town’s setting within each study area.
(v) identify potential site options, and their potential to provide for a single- or multi- site development, as informed by appropriate mitigation, and;
(vi) summarise the options available, with a landscape recommendation.
This addendum should be read in conjunction with the peripheral landscape study (PLS) particularly sections 4-7, and figures 2 and 5.

1.5 The addendum directly responds to landscape matters raised by the Inspector’s preliminary findings, and was completed August 2013. Its findings informed the landscape architect’s report to Project Management Board of 25 October 2013.
2) Mitigation strategies

2.1 Landscape mitigation aims to bring benefit to the character, condition and value of the local landscape, whilst offsetting any negative environmental effects. Guidelines for landscape and visual impact assessment (GLVA) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute for Environments Management, 2013, suggest the following strategies for mitigation of landscape impact – avoidance; reduction; and remediation/compensation. The guidelines also acknowledge the potential for enhancement, where there is scope for improvement of the baseline condition of the landscape.

2.2 In relation to the urban extension, a strategy of avoidance can direct site selection away from areas identified as having a high landscape and visual sensitivity, toward areas that can more readily accommodate the proposed development, by screening out landscape areas identified as particularly sensitive. This is consistent with NPPF para 152, which in relation to plan-making for development, advises that significant adverse impacts should be avoided, and wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. This advice is also consistent with the approach of environmental impact assessment, which in assessing a site, is required to demonstrate that there are no other options available that are less sensitive to impact.

2.3 Consequently, as a first stage of assessment, this study draws on the findings of the Yeovil PLS, to identify those areas abounding the town of the highest sensitivity, and to screen them out of further study. The remaining areas will then be evaluated alongside the further mitigation strategies noted above, of;

(a) Reduction – utilisation of existing site characteristics to shape development; reconfiguration of layout proposals to better correspond with the host landscape; and creating new landscape infrastructure that draws upon the best of the site’s features, to assist convincing assimilation of build proposals. It should also be noted that reduction infers a potential to reduce the built development footprint to better relate to the landscape pattern, and avoid on-site sensitivities. In relation to this assessment, reduction may point toward locations that are not capable of accommodating a single site option, but may help toward a provision of a multi-site option.

(b) Remediation/compensation – Where negative effects cannot be mitigated to an acceptable degree, evaluation of the landscape resource that might be lost is utilised to inform a capacity to offset or compensate for unavoidable residual effects. This will usually aim to replace like-with-like, or provide features of equivalent value. This strategy approach can be avoided in terms of landscape impact where site selection has avoided sensitive areas, and there is potential to work with the landscape pattern and local topography.

(c) Enhancement - In areas where the landscape is particularly degraded, mitigation also offers the option of enhancement of the receiving landscape and its surround – opportunities to improve visual amenity; reinforce landscape character; and potential for habitat enhancement or cultural heritage benefit, can contribute to the overall quality of the environment.
3) Selection of study areas

3.1 The Yeovil peripheral landscape study (2008) grades the town’s margins in terms of their sensitivity, to arrive at a measure of their capacity to accommodate development. The resultant areas are graded low; moderate-low; moderate; high-moderate; and high, see figure 5 of the PLS. To identify study areas for further consideration here, with the potential of land to accept mitigation central to this further study, the site selection process is undertaken with reference to the PLS figure 5.

3.2 Those areas that have been gauged as having a moderate-high and high sensitivity (conversely a low and moderate-low capacity for development) are considered areas that are vulnerable to substantial impact. Following the strategy of ‘avoidance’, as set out in para 2.2 above, the following approach will exclude the most sensitive landscape areas from the area of search for potential urban development sites. With reference to the PLS, the areas to be excluded are identified as (a) the Yeovil northern escarpment, stretching east across the escarpment from Thorne Coffin to Mudford, and (b) the southeast incised valleys, inclusive of the registered historic parks of Newton Surmaville and Barwick.

3.3 The remaining areas are then overlaid on the PLS figure 2 – landscape sensitivity plan, to seek a correspondence with the local landscape character areas identified on that plan. This step recognises that a landscape that shares common qualities, characteristics, and features, is likely to face similar impacts in the face of development, hence this commonality will facilitate the assessment of development impact and a capacity for mitigation;

3.4 Individual study areas are then defined, broadly being the local landscape character areas of the PLs fig. 2, but with minor adjustment where necessary to (i) ensure inclusion of all linking land of medium - high capacity for growth at the urban edge, and (ii) relate study area boundaries to specific physical features.

It will be noted that these study areas include a small proportion of land of lesser capacity for development (as mapped PLS fig. 5). The sensitivity of such areas is acknowledged within the evaluation of each study area, but they are included due to their potential to contribute toward the 40% quota of open space, which in turn may provide toward mitigation and assist assimilation.

3.5 The outcome areas are indicated on figure 1.1. It will be seen that there is a broad correspondence of these outcome areas, with those identified as potential development options, fig.6 of the PLS, and these comparable areas are noted in brackets below to assist cross-reference;

(A) Brympton d’Ecery/Dodham brook valley - (area I, PLS fig.6)
(B) Coker dip-slope - (area II, PLS fig.6)
(C) Middle Yeo and Dorset hillsides - (area III, PLS fig.6)
(D) Upper Mudford - (also area III, PLS fig.6)
(E) Yeovil Marsh - (area IV, PLS fig.6)
(F) Land N and W of Lufton - (area V, PLS fig.6)
4) Development impact, and the potential for landscape mitigation

4.1 Six areas have emerged for further study on and adjacent Yeovil's periphery, as identified on figure 1.1. Prior to the assessment of the capacity of these landscape areas to better assimilate development impact by mitigation, this section sets out the generic impacts and landscape issues that will be considered within section 5.

4.2 The scale of a potential urban extension of 2500 dwellings has been calculated to require in excess of 135 ha. of which a nominal area of 55-70ha (assuming a density of 35-45dph) accounts for housing; circa 8ha employment; and 9ha other built development. Including a land allowance for strategic roads, this will broadly equate to an overall land-take in the region of 75-85ha for built form and hard surfacings. Balanced against these built and surfaced works is the allowance of 40% open space, which will include for playing fields and multi-functional open space; and an additional allowance for strategic landscape provision. A reduced, or multi-site option, will necessitate a pro-rata reduction to a land area circa 100ha, of which 55-65ha would be built form.

4.3 The effects of development impact of this scale are potentially considerable. There will be a need for large areas of ground that are relatively level, and clear of constraining natural and semi-natural features, to enable building construction and major highway works. Practicable scales of building mass and height need to be accommodated, as will the need to manipulate ground levels, and provision of lighting. Such works will significantly impact upon both the landscape resource and visual amenity.

4.4 The prime landscape concerns are likely to be (i) the extent of correspondence between the development footprint and the landscape pattern; (ii) the mass and form of development as seen from its surrounds, and (iii) the likely degree of landscape and visual change.

4.5 ‘Impact’ and ‘effect’ are terms used throughout this assessment. Consistent with GLVA advice, ‘impact’ is defined as ‘the action being taken’, whilst ‘effect’ is defined as ‘the change resulting from the action’. Note also that in assessing the significance of landscape and visual effects, this can only be evaluated as ‘likely’ significance, as the detail of the scheme is unknown at this stage.

4.6 Assessment of the significance of landscape effects arising from development impact, is usually made by consideration of;
(a) the SENSITIVITY of the landscape resource;
(b) the MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE brought about by the introduction of development, and;
(c) the combination of the above to determine SIGNIFICANCE.

4.7 Generally, a landscape that is intricate; is rich in landscape features; in good condition; and projects time-depth and local distinctiveness, will be viewed as being of HIGH SENSITIVITY, whilst areas where erosion of these qualities has occurred, and that have little identity, are viewed as being LOW SENSITIVITY.

The MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE brought about by the introduction of development into a landscape will similarly range from HIGH where there are notable changes over a wide area,
or intensive change over a more limited area, to LOW where there are minor changes in
landscape characteristics.
The significance of the potential development impact upon the landscape resource is then
assessed by combining the magnitude of change predicted, and the sensitivity of the
landscape receptor, to arrive at an evaluation of the likely SIGNIFICANCE OF LANDSCAPE
EFFECTS, which will range from NEGLIGIBLE impact, through LOW, MODERATE and HIGH, to
SUBSTANTIAL.

4.8 Similarly, assessment of the significance of the effects upon visual amenity will
ordinarily consider;
(a) the SENSITIVITY of the visual receptor;
(b) the MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE brought about by the introduction of development, and;
(c) the combination of the above to determine SIGNIFICANCE.

4.9 Generally, a HIGH SENSITIVITY is attached to locations that offer prolonged viewing
opportunities; especially attached to national trails and heritage sites; tourist routes and
spaces; outdoor recreational sites; and the prime prospect from groups of private dwellings;
whilst areas with a passing awareness/limited focus of surroundings, and low usage are
credited a LOW SENSITIVITY.
The MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE brought about by the introduction of development upon
visual amenity will similarly range from HIGH where there are major discordant alteration to
key features or characteristics of the view such that post-development the view will be totally
changed, to LOW where there are minor changes/alterations to key features or
characteristics of the view such that post development the view will be largely unchanged
despite discernible differences.
The significance of the potential development impact upon visual amenity is then assessed
by combining the magnitude of change predicted, and the sensitivity of the visual receptor,
to arrive at an evaluation of the likely SIGNIFICANCE OF VISUAL EFFECTS, which will range
from NEGLIGIBLE impact, through LOW, MODERATE and HIGH, to SUBSTANTIAL.

4.10 With development of this scale, adverse impact is likely to be unavoidable. Mitigation
measures will be determined according to the specific impacts identified per study area, but
the following general landscape approaches are offered as illustrations of how site
assimilation can be achieved;
(a) modification of the development footprint, to avoid valued landscape features;
(b) incorporation of valued landscape features into the layout in a meaningful manner;
(c) tie-ing into comparable adjacent form and features, both rural and urban, to provide
authentic integration of the site with its rural landscape and townscape surrounds;
(d) breaking-up the scale of development, by planting, or placement of open space, to
reduce massing impacts;
(e) where locally characteristic, use of woody planting to screen; soften and deflect
sensitive views of the site, and;
(f) linkage of green infrastructure elements

4.11 It should be noted that extent of potential landscape character and visual profile has
already informed the sensitivity ratings that are contained within the PLS. However, they are
reviewed further here, accepting that the potential for assimilation that mitigation offers will
further rationalise the identification of suitable sites.
5) Site review

5.1 This section forms the substance of this addendum. Each of the six sites is evaluated in turn, with its context; landscape character, and visual profile described with major sensitivities identified, to enable an assessment of the likely extent and significance of the potential landscape and visual effects that could occur due to development impact.

5.2 A brief description of the character of each site's adjacent urban edge is inserted, along with an identification of on- and off-site elements, including heritage and biodiversity assets, which could contribute toward green infrastructure (GI) provision. Pertinent designated and non-landscape constraints upon potential development are also noted, prior to identifying appropriate mitigation approaches for each area, and their capacity to lessen landscape and visual impact, and assist assimilation into the wider context of the rural:urban interface, to arrive at potential development areas. These areas are then quantified, to assist identification of potential single- and multi-site options.

5.3 Note 1 - that in the following evaluations, consideration of potential impacts draws upon earlier landscape survey and appraisal work that supported the 2003 Yeovil employment land study, and the 2008 peripheral landscape study;

5.4 Note 2 – For the purposes of this assessment, the potential for landscape and visual impact is only considered as cumulative when there is the potential for a combined effect arising from a set of potential developments. This could occur where there are (i) two potential major development sites within the same local landscape character area; and (ii) when two (or more) potential development sites are both visible from identified sensitive visual receptors. When assessing the likely landscape and visual effects arising from new development, this assessment considers the totality of past, present and forthcoming (i.e sites with planning consent) development as the baseline of urban form, against which to gauge the likely effects of future urban extensions.

5.5 Note 3 – Within the site evaluations, there is reference to the likely effects of impact upon the ‘settings’ of historic parks and gardens (HP&Gs); conservation areas (CAs); and listed buildings (LBs). At this outline level, the extent of these settings are assumptions only, based primarily on a landscape view of each receptor and its immediate context. More detailed work will be required to establish setting extent, once direction(s) of growth is/are determined.
Area (A) – BRYMPTON D’EVERCY/DODHAM BROOK VALLEY

5A.1 location
This area lays to the north and east of the historic park and garden of Brympton d’Evercy, and is bounded by the A3088 to the north and east, and the lower slopes of Camp Hill to the south. The site omits an area of land in its eastern quadrant, which already has the benefit of planning permission for a business park development.

5A.2 Landscape character

1) This site lays within a distinct geographical area, which contains the headwaters of the Dodham brook, and lays between the north and south escarpments that provide the main setting of Yeovil. Much of this land once formed part of the Brympton d’Evercy Estate, which is characterised by park- and farm-land, with woodland blocks and plantations sited over falling ground to the south, and the historic park and garden of Brympton d’Evercy House to the west. Field scale is varied, with larger arable blocks broken by occasional smaller pasture that mainly correspond to the drainage pattern. Many hedgerows are intact and managed, but with some erosion of field sizes since tithe map records. The wider estate heritage is distinctively characterised by specimen oaks within the farmland. Where the historic pattern is intact and in good condition, then this is deemed to be HIGH sensitivity, though this sensitivity lessens over its eastern extent, and to the east of High Leaze Farm, due to an enlargement of field scale; reduced presence of parkland trees; and proximity of the A3088, to inform a MODERATE sensitivity.

2) The potential introduction of development form in this area could clearly impact upon the rural character of the site, albeit tempered by the presence of the adjoining urban character to the north and east. The main effects of impact will be those of;

(i) general character – whilst rural in landcover, this area does mark a transition from urban to rural land. The introduction of built form will bring about change that will grade from low magnitude at the east edge, toward a high magnitude against the boundary of the historic park. The potential effect of adjacent development upon the registered parkland is thus SUBSTANTIAL, which due to its valley setting of the listed house, and its contained surround, currently enjoys a strong individual identity, and sense of separateness from urban form, despite its close proximity to the town’s edge.

(ii) site features – the main features of this site are the narrow streams that drain to the central course of the Dodham brook, and the field hedgelines, the majority of which are managed at low height. The scale of the larger fields would accommodate built form without too great a change to the landscape resource, similarly the capacity to work with the relatively relaxed topography would result in only a LOW magnitude of change upon landscape features within the site.

(iii) distinctive elements – the site’s main distinctive features bounding the site area, are the broadleaved woodlands to the south, and the boundaries of the historic park. Laying outside the potential built envelope, these should avoid physical change, but may be subject to indirect impact. Within the site, the mature parkland oaks will merit retention, for the potential magnitude of impact of development upon these features is otherwise high.
In summary, the major issues are considered to be the accommodation of urban form relative to the distinctive character of the registered historic park; and the conservation of the estate’s mature oaks.

**5A.3 Visual amenity**

1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.2) is closely contained to the site to all sides, being demarcated by the escarpment head running west from the Bunford Hollow roundabout (the A30/A3088 junction) toward Odcombe. From Odcombe, the line of view toward the site broadly follows the road line from Odcombe to Houndstone corner, which is also the watershed of the Parrett and Yeo river catchments. Thereafter, the visual envelope to north and east can generally be defined by the urban edge, other than where ground rises toward the West Coker Road, from where housing within the Plantagenet Way development will have partial views across the site.

2) It is noted that:
   - The main public view of the site is gained both from the A3088, and from housing and employment land to the immediate north and west of the site.
   - The rural character of the study area is compromised by the clear visual presence of Yeovil sharing the same general setting, with the A3088 and adjacent developments of Alvington, and the Lynx T.E. extending a strong urban influence into the site.
   - The general area of the valley floor is visually unobtrusive, often below the trajectory line of view, and;
   - The rise of the southern scarp, and spread of developed Yeovil across its northern dip slope are the most prominent features adjoining the Brympton site.

3) The tight visual envelope associated with this area ensures public perception is limited to local view only. Within this area, the following sensitive receptors are noted;
   - Brympton d’Everycy House
   - Odcombe village edge
   - Housing at Alvington

   (i) Whilst the main prospect of Brympton House looks to the south, it also has an easterly prospect over the study area. This view takes in the immediate park edge, and farmland beyond. The urban edge of Yeovil currently lays over 1km distant, sharing the same topographical setting, but obscured by distance and the intervening tree lines. The likely magnitude of change arising from development within the study area, would be low where distant, but rising to high where in close proximity with the receptor, to thus be considered a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect.

   (ii) Housing at Odcombe’s east edge shares a similar prospect to that looking east from Brympton d’Everycy albeit more elevated and at a greater distance. This greater elevation of the receptor has a fuller perception of Yeovil within its valley setting, for it to be a prime element within the prospect. Hence additional development within the study area will project a low-medium magnitude of change, for the likely visual effect to be considered no greater
than MODERATE.

(iii) Housing at Alvington lays close to the north boundary of the study area. In most part, this edge looks over the head of the study area toward the rising hills of Yeovil’s southern escarpment on its south side, though this is partially screened by woody vegetation bounding the housing areas, to thus diffuse views. Consequently, the magnitude of change arising from development will be very low where built form occurs within the base of the vale, but with a potential to become moderate should development form follow the site’s north boundary, i.e; adjacent the housing edge, to the south of the A3088.

In summary, significant visual effects arising from development could potentially occur in proximity to Brympton House. Moderate effects could occur relative to Alvington should development extend to the immediate north edge of the site.

5A.4 Adjacent townscape

1) The character of the town edge abutting the study area comprises a mix of late 20th century residential estates; green open space; and commercial and retail estates. All these areas are separated from the study area by the alignment of the strategic A3088 road, linking Yeovil with the A303 but with no direct linkage into the site.

2) The main residential form lays in two main areas, Alvington to the north (with a westward extension to Lufton approved but not yet built) and below Sampsons Wood to the east. Both areas are characterised by two storey form; a limited palette of styles; with a high proportion of cul-de-sac development feeding into internal spine roads that are orientated toward Yeovil’s internal road network. The barrier of the A3088 is substantiated by planting belts and hedgerows, to further separate existing built form from the study area.

3) The green open space lays to the north of the site adjacent the Cartgate link/Bunford Lane roundabout. This is an area of private sports pitches, and is a spatial extension of Westlands airfield to the NE of the site. Both are primarily open grassland, with tree presence only at the bounds of the sports field.

4) Finally, employment buildings of Lynx West Trading estate lay to the east of the site, and are both small and large scale, functional and block-like in form, in a mix of architectural styles. The lay at a low elevation in the base of the vale, linking east to the larger forms of further trading estate areas, and the Westlands complex. The general scale of these buildings are planned to extend west of the A3088, incising the study area to provide a high quality business park. These will be 2 and 3 storey modern functionalist forms, and will provide a singular linkage onto the main road network from its rural side.

5A.5 Green Infrastructure

Potential contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site include the Dodham brook and its feeder streams; the better hedgerows which are vestiges of anciently enclosed land; the woodlands to the south of the site, two of which are local wildlife sites. Separated by the A3088, sports pitches lay to the north, as noted above, whilst to the southeast, Sampsons Wood offers potential for some degree of linkage. The registered HP&G of Brympton d’Evercy is noted, though much of this land is in agricultural use.
5A.6 Constraints
An assessment of the setting of Brympton d’Evercy will inform the development capacity within this site, and is likely to require clear separation of space between the park and a potential build area. The major constraint however, is the proposed Yeovil Airfield flight safety zone, which effectively precludes built development from the majority of the north part of the site.

5A.7 Summary of landscape and visual effects, and potential for mitigation/assimilation

1) The significant landscape and visual effects relative to this area A, are those of (i) potential built form against the edge of the registered parkland; (ii) building construction relative to the site’s mature oaks; and (iii) the visual effect of development adjacent the park edge and to lesser degree, the northern boundary of the site. Excessive removal of the site’s field boundaries has the capacity to be significant.

2) There is potential here for mitigation by strategies of reduction and remediation, and scope for a degree of enhancement. The potential extent of built form within the site is immediately limited by the constraint of the proposed ‘flight safety zone’, which effectively rules out consideration of the northwest half of the site. This zone also precludes much of the margins of Brympton d’Evercy park, and land adjacent Alvington, to immediately lessen the significance of potential effects upon these receptors to no more than moderate, and concentrate any potential development to the southeast half of the site.

3) Retention of the mature tree-lines bounding a number of the hedges and the main stream course, and the incorporation of these features into a GI framework linking east with the town, will also help to assimilate the site into its wider context, and play down development form to further reduce the significance of landscape and visual effects. Recognising that the setting of Brympton d’Evercy House and Park will require the intervention of substantial open space between these receptors and development to preserve the setting, mitigation offers the potential to create an open space buffer of grassland, parkland trees and plantations adjacent a potential west face of development. This approach also offers the possibility of drawing upon the historic plan, to create a convincing buffer between the heritage asset, and development’s edge, whilst contributing to recreational use. Such mitigation will also assist in reducing the likely significance of the visual effect of development presence as seen from Odcombe.

4) With the proposed ‘flight safety zone’ effectively precluding development from the north of the site, the potential for spatial linkage with the open space of Westlands Airfield and sports pitches will assist assimilation with the town, whilst offering the potential for multi-functional open space being created in this area. Further GI linkage is also feasible with the potential to link the biodiversity-rich woodlands at the site’s south edge, running east to spatially link with Sampsons Wood within the current townscape, which is also seen as a level of enhancement.

5A.8 Development potential
The potential to mitigate the likely landscape and visual effects arising from development impact as described above, informs a potential area of built development to be defined
within this site, see figure 1.8, appendix. Site constraints and mitigation opportunities indicate a potential built development area circa 15 ha. which would lay against the sites’ east edge, i.e, adjacent the proposed business park and the A3088. This represents a consolidation of the town’s growth in this direction, allied to the consented business park, and is a credible candidate for contributing toward a multi-site option. The full extent of any detailed development footprint within this area would need to be subject to confirmation arising from future detailed setting studies of Brympton HP&G, which would need to be undertaken prior to masterplanning.
Area (B) – COKER DIP-SLOPE

5B.1 Location.
This study area abuts Yeovil’s southern edge, extending between Feebarrow in the west, and the Yeovil showground to the east. Its southern extent – from west to east – abuts the Chessels Roman villa site; Burton and North Coker, to then follow the course of the Coker Brook south of Payvotts and Key Farms. Crossing the A37, the boundary runs north toward Barwick, before taking a parallel course with the A37 to include the Ivel Barbarians rugby ground, and the Yeovil showground.

5B.2 Landscape character

1) This is land that falls gently south from the head of Yeovil’s southern escarpment, which is predominantly rural in character, other than where residential form has spread south from the escarpment head, notably in the area off Nash Lane, and primarily to the south of West Coker Road. Much of this area is open, with a varied, irregular field pattern that is lined by mixed hedges, and encloses farmland that is primarily in arable production, or improved grassland. Pasture is apparent adjacent stream corridors, or within the smaller fields at village edges. The field-scale is intricate by the village edge of North Coker; Nash hamlet, and above Patchlake Cottages, whilst areas of relic parkland remain intact by North Coker Hall. Specimen trees abound within this park; west of Aldon and Barwick; and by the mature edge of the villages, and are also a feature of the stream corridors, and old hedge boundaries. A number of locally distinctive holloways criss-cross the area, cut deep into the Yeovil Sands and lined by mixed hedgerows, inclusive of mature oaks. Much of this landscape is well maintained, and expresses the distinctive characteristics noted by both the national and local character studies (as included in the PLS). Where urban presence is not pervasive, the larger part of this area is considered to be of HIGH landscape sensitivity.

Two areas fall short of this grading: First are the fields to the sides of ‘Inglemount’ off the West Coker Road, where boundaries have been removed, or hedges degraded by poor management, and suburban style homes intrude into the field pattern, yet lay outside the urban edge. These negative elements thus determine a MODERATE sensitivity grading. The second is a larger bloc of land to the south of the ‘Lower Wraxhill’ residential area, to both sides of the East Coker road, and by the Dorchester Road as far south as Keyford Farm, and east toward Barwick. This area is also considered MODERATE sensitivity, due to extensive hedgerow removal - which has been extensive both north and south of Placketts Lane; lack of tree presence; sporadic groups of non-traditional houses; and detracting urban elements such as prominence of the housing edge; and the lighting associated with the residential edge, rugby club ground, and the A37 road corridor.

2) The introduction of development form into this study area has the capacity to substantially impact upon the rural character of the site, although urban elements adjacent the built-up area of Yeovil do provide a degree of urban reference. The main impacts are likely to be those of;

(i) general character – as with much land at the urban edge, the introduction of built form will bring about a magnitude of change that will grade from low magnitude at the urban edge, and where built and engineered elements project an urban character, toward a high
magnitude in those areas that present a clear and intricate rural character, and a detachment from urban elements. The potential impact upon the valleys associated with the presence of springs and local pattern of watercourses, for example the valley between North Coker Park and Nash; below Patchlake Cottages; and the immediate valley of the Coker Brook; would be significant. The Nash – North Coker valley in particular has a contained surround, with a strong individual identity, whilst there is a strong sense of separateness within the Coker brook valley. The open ridge running between Whitepost, through Feebarrow, and on to Odcombe, is also noted for both its containment of the main town, and its open skyline character, free from urban form, and important to the setting of Brympton d’Evercy in the Dodham brook valley.

(ii) site features – the main landscape features within this site that contribute to local character, are the narrow valleys that drain to the Coker brook to the south, and the field hedgelines. It has been noted that many of the fields east of Gunville Lane have been enlarged by hedge removal, to thus accommodate built form without too great a change to the landscape resource. However, the more intricate field patterns associated with land to the north of Keyford House; above Patchlake cottages; between and adjacent North Coker Park running north to Greggs riding stables at the town’s edge; and south of Camp road by Feebarrow, are less able to accommodate the scale of development footprint, and are thus deemed vulnerable to change.

(iii) distinctive elements – the area’s main distinctive landscape features are the hollow-ways, which criss-cross the landscape in almost subterranean fashion, and the parkland trees within and adjacent North Coker Park, and adjacent Aldon/Barwick Parks, to the side of the A37. Where falling within the study area, the mature parkland oaks will merit retention, for the potential magnitude of impact of development upon these features is otherwise high. The distinctive form of the holloway does not easily adapt to urban use, and is vulnerable to over-dominance of urban elements, and thus to change, albeit at a localised level.

In summary, the likely major effects of development presence are considered to be the accommodation of urban form within the area’s small valley forms, particularly that of North Coker-Nash, and the Coker Brook. The conservation of parkland; parkland and specimen trees; and the area’s more robust and intricate hedgerow networks is highlighted, as is the interest of the hollowways. The retention of the open ridge above Brympton d’Evercy is important to local character, and development on this skyline would bring about a high magnitude of change, and potentially a substantial landscape impact.

5.8.3 Visual amenity

1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.3) is closely contained to the north by the ridge of the Yeovil southern escarpment, which in most part coincides with the urban edge, but extends south and west. Here the extent of site visibility is contained by a line of high ground running east from Odcombe, following the line of Coker Hill, which continues above East Coker park and village, before dropping to Hyde Farm (above Pincushion Corner) from where a second containing feature runs north-east to follow the line of a lower ridge that separates Barwick
from Stoford, before rising north toward Summerhouse Hill and the head of Yeovil’s southern escarpment. This line demarcates the immediate ‘visual envelope’ of the site, but does not wholly contain views toward it, for where this southeast envelope is lower, longer views toward the site can be gained, from the village edge of Closworth to the south of the site, running east through land above Ryme Intrinseca, to the Knighton and Lillington hills near Sherborne. These locations have few public receptors, from which the study area is not always clear to view; seen in conjunction with an urban skyline, and with distance placing the site within a wider panorama, they will not attract the degree of impact likely to occur within the prime visual envelope. Consequently, these areas are noted, but not evaluated further.

2) It is noted that;
• Other than at its immediate urban edge, the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its southern side.
• The Coker ridge, from Coker Hill along Isles Lane to Pinchusion corner, thereafter northeast to Barwick, is the prime visual envelope within which there is greatest potential intervisibility.
• The study area predominantly displays a rural character, though this is in-part compromised by the visual presence of residential housing south of the West Coker Road sharing the same general setting, along with the urban elements of lighting and engineered highway profiles in the vicinity of Redhouse (by the A37), and;
• The general area of the valley floor associated with the Coker Brook is visually unobtrusive, and often below the trajectory line of view.

3) A review of the visual envelope associated with this area finds that public perception of the whole of the study area is limited to local view only. Within this area, the following sensitive receptors are noted;
Barwick HP&G
The Monarchs Way regional trail
Barwick village edge
Housing at the edge of North Coker/Burton/East Coker
Naish Priory grade 1 listed building
Pavyotts Mill House and Key Farm grade 2* listed buildings
Yeovil’s housing edge
Whilst these locations are given particular consideration, the potential visual effects of development as seen from well-used footpaths above East Coker is also reviewed.

(i) Barwick House occupies a low-level location within the HP&G, and will have minimal perception of the study area, which lays over the immediate skyline to the west of the house. There are views south and west over the parkland from PROWS within the park, which look onto the east edge of the study area. This edge is currently free from built form, and integral to the setting of the HP&G. The likely magnitude of change arising from development is likely to be negligible where removed from the area abounding the HP&G, and below the eye-line of the ridge that corresponds to the park’s west boundary. However, the change arising from the presence of development form if located at the park’s immediate edge would be considered a SUBSTANTIAL effect.
(ii) The Monarchs Way regional trail follows a route across the hillside above East Coker, to follow the sweep of the Coker brook valley, before running north to Yeovil’s edge at Turners Barn Lane. Each of these stages of the route provide a different perception of the area, where (a) the area lays within a broader panorama that takes in open countryside; village and urban form; (b) a lower trajectory view where the area lays immediately to one side of the route, and (c) a similarly low trajectory view where the view is naturally contained in-part by raised land levels, but is similarly contained by development form. Stage-by-stage, the magnitude of change rises from low to high, for the impact to be considered SUBSTANTIAL where the path lays in immediate proximity of potential development.

(iii) To the west of Stoford, an area of 20th century housing within Barwick village lays over ground that falls west toward the Coker Brook, with an immediate prospect of land within the study area, to the east of the A37. This is a single field, which thus projects a rural landcover, which is in part compromised by urban form in the vicinity of Red House; the lighting columns of both the rugby club, and the roundabout; and traffic activity. With the land falling toward Barwick, the potential for development massing would generate a medium-high magnitude of change, to thus create a HIGH effect, without amelioration.

(iv) Much of the housing within North and East Coker and Burton has little immediate prospect of the study area, due to intervening landform; landscape features; and the village’s own built form. From those lengths of the village edge that have a direct prospect of the study area, the predominant view is low trajectory. These views will extend toward the skyline, where Yeovil’s edge can be perceived, unless buffered by intervening trees and hedging. The likely magnitude of change arising from development within the study area, would be low where distant, but rising to high where in close proximity with the receptor, to be considered a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect in the immediate face of these receptors.

(v) A grade 1 listed building, Naish Priory has a relatively low-elevation position within the valley that runs north from North Coker Park. Its prime prospect is north toward housing at Yeovil’s edge, and south toward the Coker villages, whilst raised land to east and west contains the site, and most views out. Any built development mass within the immediate valley would bring about a high magnitude of change, and potentially a SUBSTANTIAL effect. This magnitude can be reduced to minor, to reduce visual effect, by placing development outside the valley within which the Priory sits.

(vi) Pavyotts Mill House, and Key Farm are two grade 2* listed buildings that lay alongside the valley associated with the Coker Brook. The prime prospect of each is orientated toward the valley, though Pavyotts also has a prospect to the north. Potential development mass within the immediate valley would bring about a high magnitude of change, and a likely SUBSTANTIAL effect if in close proximity. As above, the magnitude of change can be reduced to lessen the likely visual effect, by drawing development back from the immediate valley context.

(vii) Yeovil’s housing edge – Due to the shallow gradients over which the residential areas south of the West Coker Road lay, it is primarily the dwellings adjacent the rural edge that have a clear prospect of the study area, whilst streets aligning south provide a common directed view toward the countryside. Built form immediately alongside this edge would intervene in views south, to introduce a high magnitude of change, but with land within the
study area continuing to fall away from the viewer, the visual effect of development impact will lessen from SUBSTANTIAL in its immediate face, to LOW at distance.

Whilst the above are noted as the most sensitive receptors, it is also noted that ROWs crossing East Coker Park, and the green lane above Hyde Farm are well-used, to thus be considered receptors of moderate sensitivity. Looking north from these relatively elevated vantage points, the prospect is of the immediate villages within a narrow rural vale, with open farmland beyond, which provides the intervention between the villages and the town’s edge at the head of the dip-slope. The local prominence and scale of the farmland is more apparent in these higher views, albeit it is seen in conjunction with residential Yeovil. Should development occur throughout the study area, a moderate-high visual effect could occur, primarily from massing effects. This impact however, would be lessened with a scaling-back and breaking-up of the development footprint.

In summary, significant visual effects arising from development will occur should development lay in close proximity to the edges of North and East Coker, and within the valley setting of Naish Priory, Payottts Mill House and Key Farm. Massing effects are potentially significant when viewed from sensitive receptors to the south, and from within Barwick. Skyline development could impact upon Barwick HP&G.

5B.4 Adjacent townscape

1) The character of the town edge abutting the study area primarily comprises 20th century residential streets and suburbs, with green open space marking the transition from town to countryside at the area’s east edge. The main strategic road of the A37 runs through the study area’s eastern half, linking Yeovil’s town centre with Dorchester and Weymouth to the south.

2) The main area of residential from are those housing areas that lay to the south of the West Coker Road. These areas lay at the head of Yeovil’s southern dip-slope, at a gentle elevation above the study area. Much of this is rectilinear street-based development, of both single and 2 storey forms, and in a mix of styles and materials. Whilst the majority of homes at the residential edge back onto the site, housing has grown along the roads and lanes linking with Nash and North Coker, and these network with internal residential roads. There are similarly footpath links from the residential areas into the study area, though the sunken form of Plackett Lane (West) runs across the grain of both the street pattern, and the fields of the study area to the south.

3) Two small areas of detached properties in sylvan plots; opposite Watercombe Heights, and above Little Tarrat Lane, are characterised by the larger individual house forms, and ornamental specimen trees, within generous plots. The former abuts a small riding school, whose training space and paddocks directly segue into the pasture fields of the study area. The sylvan character of the Little Tarrat Lane residential area similarly makes a sympathetic transition into the main green open space of Aldon’s private parkland, which is characterised by grassland and specimen trees, and spatially merges with Yeovil’s country park to the northeast, and Barwick historic parkland to the east of the study area.
5B.5 Green Infrastructure
Potential contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site include the valley associated with the Coker Brook, and the two shallow valleys that run south from the town’s edge, through Nash and Patchlake respectively, toward it. Hedgelines north of Burton are vestiges of anciently enclosed land, and the holloway corridors, and lanes utilised by the Monarchs Way provide a potential GI framework, whilst the fields occupying the sites of the Roman villas may similarly offer potential. To the east of the A37, the recreational spaces of the showground and rugby pitches merge with parkland to spatially link the east side of the study area with the open pasture of the historic parklands beyond.

5B.6 Constraints
The setting of two Roman Villas, Chessels in West Coker, and above Dunocks Lane, will inform the development capacity of the site, as will the settings of Barwick HP&G; North Coker conservation area; and a number of the listed buildings adjacent and within the site. All will likely require commensurate separation of built form from these heritage assets, according to their context; use, and history. There is an area associated with the Coker brook that is associated with flooding, with land west of Pavyotts farm particularly sizeable.

5B.7 Summary of landscape & visual effects, and potential for mitigation/assimilation
1) The significant landscape and visual effects that potentially could occur within this study area are those of (i) potential built form against the village edges; heritage assets; local valleys, and lengths of the Monarchs Way. (ii) Skylines are noted as sensitive to development, particularly above Barwick HP&G and above the A30 by Feebarrow, whilst the (iii) potential for massing has some significance when viewed from higher vantage. The (iv) conservation of parkland; parkland and specimen trees; and the area’s more robust and intricate hedgerow networks is necessary, as the effect arising from the removal of any of these features has the capacity to be adverse.

2) Reviewing the range of potential impacts within this area, suggests a need for mitigation by strategies of reduction, remediation and enhancement. By reduction, in the first instance development can be precluded from the vicinity of Burton; North Coker, North Coker Park and Naish Priory, to enable potentially substantial landscape and visual effects to be reduced to low and moderate-low. A limit to growth in these areas can be defined based upon setting studies relative to the local conservation areas and heritage assets. As well as defining a limit to growth north and west of North Coker, sensitivities identified in setting assessments of Barwick HP&G, Barwick church, Key Farm, and Pavyotts Mill House, will inform an acceptable east and southward extent of growth. Similarly sensitive skylines above Barwick HP&G, and by Feebarrow should remain free of development to avoid a substantial landscape effect.

3) Mature tree lines and the site’s few robust hedgerows should be retained, especially where in ‘green lane’ form, to provide a landscape framework for development, and to break-up potential development mass. As GI, these green corridors can combine with the stream corridor running north through Patchlake, extending on to the town’s edge via the roman villa site, to offer the opportunity to create a green infrastructure framework, and separation of development blocks. The route of the Monarchs Way running north from Pavyotts Farm offers similar opportunities of mitigation and GI assimilation. These GI elements and
features can be enhanced by associated open space and tree planting to link with existing landscape features at the town’s edge, to positively use part of the 40% allocation of green space within urban form. This also reduces the potential for massing impacts to occur.

4) Further allocation of open space can be utilised to intervene between potential development and sensitive areas, namely the faces to North Coker and the Coker brook, with tree planting included where visual sensitivities are noted, and there is a convincing tie with local character. The provision of parkland style plantings can be particularly effective in assimilating development where local to existing parkland character, such as potential open space areas toward North Coker Park; and adjacent Barwick and Aldon Parks.

5) A break-up of potential built form, by use of local open-space within the development, and street orientation, could be manipulated by the current urban edge, where new build would otherwise be particularly intrusive. A rectilinear pattern that corresponds to the established housing to the north will assist built townscape integration, whilst GI corridors extending up the valleys above Nash and Patchlake, can link into the fabric of the town via the open space associated with the riding stables; the green lanes and sylvan areas either side of West Coker Road above Nash; and green lane, parkland trees and open parkland west of Aldon Park.

6) The likelihood of substantial visual effects area noted as significant facing Barwick village. There is potential to reduce this to moderate by breaking up development areas to avoid the steeper slopes, and creating separation by incorporation of open space and tree planting within this area, which can link with the major GI corridor of the Coker Brook. A similar approach of open space and planting can be used on the upper shoulder of land west of Keyford House, to reduce potential massing effects. This can be extended west into the area of open farmland west of Tarrat Lane, to introduce some measure of enhancement where the land is currently devoid of landscape features, and to tie into the potential GI framework created around the route of the Monarchs Way, and linking with the established tree belts at the town’s edge. The need for a robust planted framework, and selection of a location of lesser elevation site, will be essential to assist assimilation of the likely bulkier forms of employment buildings.

5B.8 Development potential
A small area circa 12ha comprising two sites to south, and north, of the A30 adjacent to White Post garage indicate non-strategic development potential, and are currently the subject of planning applications. Their development would represent a consolidation and rounding-off of the urban edge to the southwest of the town.

The potential to mitigate landscape and visual effects as described above, informs a potential development area to be defined to the south of the town, fig 1.9 – appendix - which with a capacity to accommodate circa 80ha. built area offers the choice of either a single urban extension, or if reduced in scale, as contributing toward a multi-site option. This area extends from land east of Gunville Lane, extending across to the A37, and includes a small area adjacent Barwick. The selection of a single urban extension here would be dependent upon the 40% open space standard and structural landscape provision to be fully utilised, to ensure commensurate mitigation will convincingly assimilate the site into its wider context. From a landscape perspective, it would represent the town’s finite growth in this direction.
Area (C) – MIDDLE YEO & DORSET HILLSIDES

5C.1 Location
This area lays between the containing features of the River Yeo to the west, and Babylon Hill and its northward extending ridge to south and east. Its northward extent runs to the course of the Trent Brook which meets the River Yeo approx. 1km north of Over Compton, whilst the line of the A30 marks the site’s southern extent. The area lays wholly within Dorset.

5C.2 Landscape character

1) This site lays within the narrow confines of Yeovil’s east edge, and the rising Dorset escarpment to the east. North of Sherborne Road, a large open field is surrounded by built form for part of its perimeter, with insufficient landscape features present to provide a robust buffer of urban presence, and is thus considered to be of LOW sensitivity. Further to the north, Yeovil’s urban edge is better defined by the course of both the rail embankment, and the River Yeo with its bank side tree lines providing a buffer element, complemented by the plantings and open space of Yeovil Country Park. These features provide some sense of separation from the built form of the town to that of the agricultural land on the Dorset side of the river. This Dorset land comprises large arable fields, interspersed with smaller pastures where combes fall toward the Yeo. Hedges are trimmed, and with the urban presence of Yeovil in close proximity, along with its association of sound and movement, this area is assessed as being of MODERATE sensitivity, other than a singular combe falling to the Yeo and its adjacent meadow, which demonstrates little change from its historic form, is enclosed, and contained both topographically, and by mature hedgerows, to be considered HIGH sensitivity.

2) Whilst this site projects a rural landcover, by laying in immediate proximity to Yeovil’s east edge, and within the setting of the town as defined by the enclosing hillsides, its character is in-part subverted by the close presence of Yeovil. Thus the main impacts are likely to be;

(i) general character – the lower ground by Compton Road is typical of urban fringe land where the presence of built form, lighting and activity ensures that urban character pervades across much of this land, and change arising from development could be achieved relatively comfortably. The urban association lessens where the hillsides rise above the valley bottom, particularly where elevated above the enclosure of the immediate river valley which narrows west of Over Compton. Here, the potential introduction of built form will bring about an increasing magnitude of change, the more elevated, and closer the proximity to existing settlement and local ridge, its presence should come. Hence development impact adjacent Over Compton or Trent could create a MODERATE-HIGH landscape effect.

(ii) site features – the site has few significant landscape features, other than the established hedge lines that bound the small field system northwest of the Over Compton Road, and riverside trees alongside the Yeo and Trent Brook. With the majority of the fields large-scale, the capacity to accommodate built form without impact upon the landscape resource could be achieved without too great an effect.

(iii) distinctive features – the main feature of the site is its topography, for the site includes the steep slopes of Babylon Hill, to the south of Over Compton, whilst the immediate ridge
line containing the Yeo valley to the Dorset side runs north of Over Compton. The steepness of the gradient alone will preclude development from Babylon Hill, to thus avoid impact, but the open character of the Over Compton-Trent ridge would be vulnerable to a high magnitude of change should development spread into the ridge zone, to potentially create a HIGH landscape effect.

In summary, the likely major landscape effects are considered to be the accommodation of built form adjacent the local villages; the conservation of the small-field system and meadow combe northwest of the Compton Road, and the preservation of the open ridgetops and upper hillsides.

5C.3 Visual amenity
1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.4) is closely contained to the south and east, being demarcated by the sweep of Babylon Hill and its southward extension toward Summerhouse Hill, and north toward Trent. The east side of Yeovil overlaying the hillsides falling toward the Yeo define the westward extent of the visual envelope. Containment becomes less emphatic to the north, where the valley opens toward the Ilchester plain, to enable longer low-trajectory views toward the site from Mudford, Hummer and Trent, though for the former two settlements, these are partial only.

2) It is noted that;
   • The main public view of the site is gained from urban Yeovil, looking across the valley to the Dorset hills beyond.
   • The rural character of the study area is compromised by the clear visual presence of Yeovil sharing the same general setting, particularly at its southern end above the A30 Sherborne Road.
   • The general area of the valley floor is visually unobtrusive, less so the rising hillsides, and;
   • The steep sides of Babylon Hill are the most prominent landscape features of the site.

3) The relatively tight visual envelope associated with this area ensures public perception is limited to local view only. Within this area, only one receptor is identified as being highly sensitive, that of Trent, although the few properties at the west edge of Over Compton, and residential Yeovil are identified as moderate receptors.

(i) Much of the site is obscured from Trent, other than the open field that lays over the north facing sides of the Over Compton ridge. This area is separated from the urban edge of Yeovil, as represented by the current partial construction of Wyndham Park. Development on the Dorset side of the valley would be a departure from the village’s southward prospect. With the land falling toward Trent, the potential for development massing and this introduction of additional built form in closer proximity, would bring about a HIGH magnitude of change, to thus generate a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect upon properties with vantage at the village edge.

(iii) Over Compton lays above the main study area, with only a small group of housing at the village edge in close proximity. The outlook extends above the Yeo valley, to perceive
residential Yeovil on its far side. Although urban form characterises this view, it is distant and separated from the viewer. Built form extending onto the higher ground adjacent the village, is considered a high magnitude of change, to impart a MODERATE-HIGH effect. On the opposite side of the river, Yeovil looks toward the hills on the east side of the Yeo valley and beyond. Much of the foreground to this view is urban in context, and the valley lays below the main trajectory of view. It is only the potential for development on the upper hillsides that would introduce any magnitude of change, this is considered likely to be moderate if ranging across the hillsides, with the subsequent visual effect likely to be MODERATE.

In summary, significant visual effects arising from development would likely occur where in proximity to the edge of Over Compton, and where facing toward Trent.

5C.4 Adjacent townscape

1) Yeovil and its fringe form the west edge of the study area, demarcated by the River Yeo, which other than the A30 Sherborne Road bridge crossing at the southern end, wholly separates the study area from the town. The character of this town edge comprises a linear park of green open space; 20th century residential estates; and commercial and infrastructure areas.

2) Open green space runs alongside the river, and links west back into the Birchfield’s residential area. It is characterised by an informal mix of grassland; scrub, and plantation. Much of this is designated as Yeovil Country Park, and its informal character is planned to extend north alongside the river, in relation to the Wyndham Park development. Its corridor runs alongside the main Bristol-Weymouth train line, which is a further separating factor.

3) Pen Mill’s employment buildings and infrastructure elements lay over the shallow lower slopes of the valley sides, running broadly parallel with the river, merging northwest with Yeovil east’s wider residential form on rising ground. The employment buildings are both small- and mid-scale, functional and block-like in form, in a mix of materials and styles.

4) Established residential form lays to the west of the area characterised by employment form, comprising the mix of Pen Mills early 20th century terraces with later 20th century housing of Little Lyde. The recent and ongoing residential development of Wyndham Park does abutt the study area, laying opposite the rising hillsides of the study area’s northern extent. Predominantly 2 storey with an element of 3 storey, this development is a mix of mews court and street residences, of mixed form and material finishes, tying back into the town’s internal road network, and punctuated and fringed by corridors of public open space. Its east face is directed across the river toward the study area faces, but there is no direct linkage.

5C.5 Green Infrastructure

There are two prime potential contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site, which are the River Yeo and its floodplain to the west; and the steep scruffy slopes below the head of Babylon Hill to the east. A group of small pastures to the east of old Mill farm, and the combe that runs west from above this farm, offers the potential for GI linkage between these two areas.
5C.6 Other constraints
It is noted that the gradient is particularly steep below Babylon Hill, similarly so above the course of the Yeo west of Over Compton, to preclude the potential of development. The floodplain associated with the River Yeo is particularly extensive to the west of the Compton Road, and opposite Wyndham Park, and whilst such land will have recreational and open space value (as will the hillsides) it will also preclude most built development.

5C.7 Summary of landscape & visual effects, and potential for mitigation/assimilation

1) The main likely visual and landscape effects identified within this area are noted to be (i) the potential massing and dominance of urban form upon the local village edges, (ii) the potential adverse imprint of development upon the small-field system and meadow combe northwest of the Compton Road, and (iii) the loss of the distinctive character of the open ridgetops and upper hillsides above the Yeo valley.

2) Mitigation of these effects would appear to be straightforward. By reducing the potential scale of development to avoid a clear visual correspondence with the villages; by locating development below the local skyline – which relative to Babylon Hill is already necessitated due to the steep gradient of the rising hillsides; and by allocating the small field system and meadow combe as open space, potential high and substantial effects are immediately reduced.

3) The potential to create a GI framework to assist assimilation can be taken by extending scrub and woody habitat along the higher ground to the east, thus extending the woody characteristic found on the upper scarp of Babylon Hill. The Yeo and its floodplain has the capacity to offer multi-functional open space; whilst the incorporation of the small fields and meadow combe as informal open space will create a framework for development; break-up potential housing mass as viewed from Yeovil, and create green infrastructure linkage between the hilltops, and the Yeo. To the north of the site, emphatic planting areas, tied into informal open space would be needed to contain site growth, and create physical and visual separation of development from Trent.

4) Integration with the current townscape is proposed by visual linkage of open space across the river, running from Birchfield Park, crossing the Yeo, and following the combe above Old Mill farm as described above, whilst the form of development could effectively ‘mirror’ the town, with the presence of open space along the Yeo; employment buildings sited on lower, shallow ground toward the A30; with housing extending onto rising ground.

5C.8 Development potential
By applying the above mitigation objectives to the site area, a potential build area in the region of 45ha can be identified, as indicated fig 1.10 – appendix. The combination of the constraints of floodplain and slope, and the mitigation principles outlined above, infer a capacity for a site option made-up of 3 areas of built development. The largest area lays to either side of the Compton Road, with two smaller zones laying on the shallower gradients of the hillsides northwest of Over Compton. Whilst not within South Somerset, this area lays within the setting of the town, to provide a credible development option. The scale of the area suggests this could either be a reduced single-site, or a contributor to a multi-site option.
Area (D) – UPPER MUDFORD

5D.1 Location
This study area abuts Yeovil’s developed edge between the junction of the A359 with Lyde Road, extending east alongside the Wyndham Park site that is currently under development, to meet the River Yeo. It then follows the course of the Yeo to Mudford, where it returns southwest along the line of the A359 to meet again with the edge of Yeovil.

5D.2 Landscape character

1) The Upper Mudford area is an eastward extension of Yeovil’s northern escarpment, yet its character differs from the main escarpment in being more rolling, and less dramatic and incised than the main scarp. It is separated from the main escarpment by a low ridge that runs toward Mudford, and it is this ridge that demarcates the point of the subtle change in character. The area is a rounded shoulder of land that generally falls NE from Yeovil toward the Yeo valley, and is gently incised by a single combe that falls from Oaklands on the A359, to the hamlet of Up Mudford. Residential development is apparent at the head of the scarp in the vicinity of Primrose Lane, and many of the adjoining fields are either sub-divided and managed for horses, or have been enlarged for agriculture. There is little tree presence on the upper escarpment, thus this area is evaluated as being MODERATE sensitivity. The mid and lower slopes of this escarpment have greater diversity of field-scale, and is in mixed agricultural use. Hedgerows remain intact, and relic orchards are apparent around the ‘lost’ settlement of Up Mudford. There is little evidence of urban expression in these areas, and they are thus evaluated as HIGH sensitivity, other than land by the immediate edge of Mudford village, which is graded moderate.

2) The introduction of development form into this area would clearly impact upon the rural character of this site. Whilst the developed edge of Yeovil is apparent along the head of the shoulder of land, it has not ‘spilled’ over it onto its northward face, other than a limited incursion off Primrose Lane. The remainder of the site opens to the wider Yeo Vale, and is similar in its farmed character. The main effects that would arise from development upon this landscape are likely to be;
   (i) general character – whilst the site is rural in landcover, there are elements of built form and domestic land-use apparent to the north of Lyde Road and Primrose Lane, which mark a transition from urban to rural land, just as the activity associated with the A359 Yeovil-Mudford road suggests the close proximity of a large settlement. Consequently the introduction of built form in these locations would bring about a medium magnitude of change, suggesting a MODERATE effect upon the general character of the urban edge. As has been noted earlier, the introduction of built form will bring about a magnitude of change that will increase in amount as it spreads away from the urban edge toward those rural areas that present a rich and distinctive rural character, free from urban elements. Hence the potential effect upon the Up Mudford combe, and the intricate arrangement of fields and relic orchards around Up Mudford, and the floodplain beyond would rise to SUBSTANTIAL, due to a high magnitude of change.
   (ii) site features – the main landscape features of this site that contribute to local character, are the remaining traditional hedgerows that demarcate the fields, and the woody vegetation and rough grassland that inhabits the combe draining ENE through Up Mudford.
into the Yeo. Between Primrose Lane and the Yeo, many of the fields have been enlarged by hedge removal, to thus have a capacity to accommodate built form without too great a change to the landscape resource. However, the more intricate field patterns and orchards associated with Up Mudford, as noted above, are less able to accommodate a large scale of development, and are thus deemed vulnerable to a potential development impact.

(iii) distinctive elements –
Whilst the escarpment skyline is noted above as home to certain urban elements, it currently provides containment of Yeovil to the south, whilst the open character of the upper slopes of the escarpment are important in maintaining the rural landcover that enables this area to be expressed as a separate entity to that of the town that lays to the south of the parish boundary (the southern boundary of the study area). Consequently, this general upper area is considered vulnerable to a high magnitude of change should development spread across the outer face of the escarpment, to potentially create a HIGH landscape effect.

In summary, the potential major landscape effects that are likely to arise from development are considered to be those of change upon the general rural character of the outer scarp face; the accommodation of urban form within the narrow combe and traditional field pattern adjacent Up Mudford; and the conservation of the few specimen trees, and the area’s more robust hedgerows.

5D.3 Visual amenity

1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.5) is contained by the main escarpment to the south, but extends east toward Ilchester, to follow high ground associated with Limington, West and Queen Camel, and Sutton Montis, from where it runs south along the local hilltops to Adber, continuing south to include the villages of Trent and Nether Compton, before returning west to join the site below the confluence of the River Yeo and Trent Brook.

However, this ZVI extent is driven by the inclusion of the low (Mudford) ridge along which the A359 to Mudford runs. Should development be kept clear of this ridge, then the ZVI is reduced, to the extent that its east boundary loosely follows the line of the River Yeo, from West Mudford, projecting north toward the east edge of RNAS Yeovilton, from where it continues east as described above.

For the purposes of this evaluation, due to its high visual profile, and its benefit of visual containment, application of a mitigation strategy of avoidance to the Mudford ridge, to thus exclude it from development, clearly lessens potential impact. Consequently this evaluation makes the assumption of removal, to thus determine that the smaller (eastern) visual envelope only is considered below.

2) It is noted that;
• The site is prominent, by virtue of its elevated position on the upper slopes of the north-facing escarpment, which ensures broad public perception of the study area.
• The site assumes greatest magnitude when viewed from the A359 approach from the Yeo valley, and the settlements immediately to the northeast of the site.
• Other than at its immediate urban edge, all of the main vantage points looking toward the site lay to its north and eastern side.
Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil (addendum)

- The area has few landscape components to draw the eye, rather it is its topographical location that endows it visual prominence, allied to the contrasting form of Yeovil’s urban edge at intervals along its skyline.

2) The visual envelope associated with this area results in a wide public perception of the site. However, it is accepted that settlements at a distance greater than 4km from the site are at sufficient distance to be considered less than highly sensitive, due to distance, and the small margin of the field of view that the site would occupy. Consequently, within this reduced area, the following sensitive receptors are noted:

Up Mudford, including grade 2* listed Manor farmhouse
Mudford
Trent
Monarchs Way regional trail

Whilst these locations are given particular consideration, the potential visual impact of development as seen from the wider vale is also reviewed. It is also noted that the ZVIs for this site, and the study area C (Middle Yeo and Dorset Hillsides) indicate a theoretical potential for cumulative impact of development of areas C and D upon views from Trent, Up Mudford, and Mudford’s east edge, which is considered further below.

(i) Up Mudford is a ‘shrunken’ medieval settlement, no more than a cluster of farms and cottages, inclusive of two listed buildings. It lays over the lower slopes of the scarp face, within the study area. Whilst there is a skyline evidence of the town’s presence, the hamlet’s surround is agricultural land, with the open rising scarp primary in the local view, for there is little intervening form. The introduction of built form raises the potential of massing, which would generate a high magnitude of change in close proximity, to thus create a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect.

(ii) The south and southeast edge of Mudford abuts and overlooks the study area, though perception of the rising land is primarily limited to properties at the village edge. These views look towards the rising scarp, and the hills on the Dorset side of the border. Again, there is a skyline evidence of the town’s presence, with little intervening form or woody cover in-between. The likely magnitude of change arising from development within the study area, would be low where distant, but rising to high where in close proximity with the receptor, to similarly be considered a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect where occurring in close proximity.

(iii) From Trent, the site is viewed across the Yeo flood plain, which looks onto the falling shoulder of agricultural land, where the line of the north escarpment appears much less defined, to enable views of the growing mass of the current construction of Wyndham Park, representing Yeovil’s urban form. Whilst land falling toward Trent raises a potential for exacerbated development massing, by aggregating the current and proposed extent of built form, this is tempered by the separation ensured by the Yeo’s presence; visual buffering of tree lines and landform, and the degree of settlement already established within the view. Consequently, this introduction of additional built form in closer proximity, would bring about a moderate magnitude of change, to thus generate a MEDIUM visual effect.

(iv) The theoretical potential for a substantive cumulative effect arising from a potential development footprint within study area C is in most part negated by ruling out land facing
Trent as having development potential. The likely footprint for site C (figure 1.11) is devised to exclude vantage points within Trent from visual effects, which thus avoids cumulative effect. However, the northern, upper edge of area C would be seen from Up Mudford and Mudford. It would however, be seen as a mid-distance element; in conjunction with any potential development within the Up Mudford area; in the longer term obscured by planting mitigation; and occupying a minor field of view when looking south. Hence the significance of cumulative visual effects is considered to be LOW.

(v) The Monarchs Way regional trail follows a route across the floodplain north of the Yeo, between Mudford and Trent, before taking a rising course through Trent village toward the Dorset Hills. Both of these stages of the route provide a similar perception of the study area, where the study area – by virtue of its rising profile - is one of the main foci of the local panorama, though it is separated by intervening ground of open countryside, with hedge and tree lines disrupting intervisibility. Consequently the magnitude of change is considered to be moderate, for the significance of visual effects to be considered MODERATE.

Whilst the above are noted as the most sensitive receptors, it is noted that the extent of the visual envelope includes numerous villages, from Marston Magna north to Queen Camel, and includes the Corton ridge, and Cadbury Castle. Whilst these are distant vantage points, they take in a prospect of the intervening ground that perceives the escarpment’s slopes free from development form, to be part of the identity of the intervening countryside, whilst Yeovil’s form is contained at the skyline. This cultural perception of Yeovil’s edge will change significantly with development presence, thus a MODERATE-HIGH significance is attached to the visual effect as gauged across this wide area.

In summary, potentially substantial significance of visual effects arising from development would occur should development lay in close proximity to the edge of Mudford and Up Mudford hamlet. Massing effects are potentially significant when viewed from sensitive receptors with open prospect to the north. Similar effects are gained in-part from the route of the Monarchs Way. The visual character of the study area would change significantly as viewed from within the area’s wider visual envelope.

5D.4 Adjacent townscape

1) The character of the town edge directly abutting this area is primarily 20th century residential, merging with new housing currently under construction, and areas of linking green space. It lays alongside the A357 to the west, which links Yeovil’s centre and eastern quadrant with settlement to the north.

2) Residential form currently runs along the western length of the study area’s southern boundary, and this will extend east with the build-out of Wyndham Park. It broadly coincides with the head of the northern escarpment. Yeovil’s residential edge lays south and east of Lyde Road, characterised by two- and some single- storey forms; a limited palette of styles and materials; with a high proportion of cul-de-sac development feeding into internal streets that network onto Lyde Road. Incising slightly into the study area’s south edge is Primrose Lane’s housing, which originally developed along the lane leading to Up Mudford. Comprising early-mid 20th century chalet style housing, it is now interspersed with recent two-storey infill of mixed form and style.
3) Green space – in the form of an unmanaged pasture field - currently defines the urban edge of the Wyndham Park development, but when built out, this will present a residential edge of predominantly 2 storey traditional house forms, in a mix of mews and street layouts, of muted, mixed material finishes. The immediate boundary is planned as a green corridor punctuated by specimen trees, with larger areas of green space in the form of the playing field within the school’s grounds, and the informal character of the Yeovil country park alongside the river Yeo at the site’s east edge.

5D.5 Green Infrastructure
Potential contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site include the river yeo along the site’s eastern boundary; the feeder stream falling from Oaklands, including the pastures of the county wildlife site to its north; the better hedgerows which are vestiges of anciently enclosed land; and the green corridor that runs along the northern edge of the Wyndham Park development and incorporates the hedgebank of the Mudford parish boundary. The small paddocks and pastures within Up Mudford are noted, though much of this land is in agricultural use.

5D.6 Other constraints
The gradient is particularly steep around the combe that runs from Oaklands to Up Mudford. This combe also lays alongside a local nature reserve of three semi-improved meadows, to thus preclude the potential of development from these areas. The floodplain associated with the River Yeo is extensive between Trent and Mudford, and whilst such land will have recreational and open space value, it will also preclude potential for most built development.

5D.7 Summary of landscape and visual effects, and the potential for mitigation/assimilation
1) The significant landscape and visual effects that potentially could occur within this study area are those of (i) potential built form against the village settlement edges; (ii) massing impacts over the escarpment face, and (iii) change upon the general rural character of the outer scarp face. The (iv) the conservation of traditional field patterns adjacent Up Mudford; relic orchards; specimen trees; and the area’s more robust and intricate hedgerow networks is necessary - the effect arising from the removal of any of these features has the capacity to be adverse.

2) Reviewing the range of potential impacts within this area, suggests a need for mitigation by strategies of reduction, and remediation. By reduction, development can be precluded from the vicinity of Mudford and Up Mudford, by drawing a limit to growth based upon setting studies, to enable likely effects of substantial significance to be reduced to moderate, with scope for further mitigation through planting and GI provision. Similarly, the biodiversity interest, and need for a specific maintenance regime, would limit growth to the margins of the nature conservation site. It has earlier been noted that development should be held back from the line of the A359, to avoid potential visual effects as viewed from the central Yeo vale. Retention of the mature trees within the site, and the site’s few robust hedgerows, will help to create a framework for development form, whilst the combe running northeast from Oaklands and its associated local wildlife site, offers the opportunity to create
a green infrastructure link with Up Mudford, to assist in drawing-up a credible green edge to
a potential development area.

3) A significant landscape and visual effect would potentially arise from the introduction of
built form onto the outer faces of the northern escarpment, and the resultant potential for
massing. Whilst housing by Primrose Lane has crept onto the outward upper hillsides, and
the Wyndham Park development is increasing in profile as viewed from Trent, in most part
the balance is even now held in check when viewed from vantage points within the wider
vale to the north. This effect of introducing development can be moderated to a degree:
There is potential to reduce massing impact by breaking up development areas to avoid the
steeper and highly visible slopes, and creating separation by incorporation of open space
and tree planting within these areas, to particularly reduce the effect of development impact
as viewed from Trent and the Mudford settlements. The effect of an aggregation of potential
skyline development can similarly be lessened by planning building growth adjacent those
lengths of the current edge that are less conspicuous to local view, and to positively use part
of the 40% allocation of green space within the most prominent faces of the site. Robust
planting areas will also assist a reduction of prospect of the development edge from local
settlements, whilst tie-ing the development into the wider landscape pattern.

4) The potential to develop a GI network is already noted by inclusion and linkage of the
Yeo’s floodplain to the east, with the combe; its associated biodiversity-rich pastures; and the
small paddocks within Up Mudford, and this also offers some recreational potential. GI
within development can also be achieved by linkage of the open space areas suggested in 3)
above, tied into the hedgerow pattern, and linking back to the current edge of development,
planned as a linear green corridor.

5) Development here would place residential development alongside an evolving residential
dge. Assimilation with the town will be achieved by the ready potential for a sensitive
integration of street patterns, and achieving a correspondence of open space, and tree
planting areas, to enable the two areas to ‘merge’. Visual coherence can be assisted by use
of comparable material tones.

5D.8 Development potential
The potential to mitigate landscape and visual effects as described informs a potential
development site to be defined within this area, as indicated fig 1.11 – appendix. Site
constraints and mitigation opportunities indicate a potential built development area
approaching 45 ha across the escarpment to the south of Up Mudford, but this potential is
dependent upon the inclusion of the 40% open space standard, and structural landscape
 provision, to ensure commensurate mitigation will convincingly assimilate the site into its
wider context. The scale of the area suggests this could either be a reduced single-site
option, or a contributor to a multi-site proposal. From a landscape perspective, whilst
mitigation potential has the capacity to reduce the major impacts from high to moderate, it
cannot wholly counter this substantive incursion over the northern skyline, and the current
finely-held balance would be lost as viewed from the northeast.
Area (E) – YEOVIL MARSH

5E.1 Location
This study area is focussed upon the hamlet of Yeovil Marsh, being bounded by the A37 and the toe of the Yeovil northern escarpment to the south and southwest, whilst the lane running between Carents and Woodrows Farms mark the eastern boundary. The line of a farm track running north from the A37 toward the east end of Oakley Lane marks the site’s eastern extent, whilst its northern extent runs to the edge of Green Moor.

5E.2 Landscape character

1) Yeovil Marsh lays at the toe of the Yeovil north escarpment, and marks a point of transition from the scarp, to the clay vale. Whilst much of the landscape pattern around the hamlet of Yeovil Marsh is broadly intact, with land to the south typical of the varied topography and landcover of the escarpment, noted within the PLS as being HIGH sensitivity, the A37 road corridor adjacent the hamlet is an intrusive element, particularly where the open character of the fields enables the noise and movement associated with the road, and its related elements of signage and lighting, to intrude into the wider landscape. These areas are thus considered MODERATE sensitivity, as is the presence of sporadic building form unrelated to a traditional village nucleus around Yeovil Marsh. North of the hamlet, the general landscape is one of mixed farming, with arable predominant above the level of the watercourses, with field boundaries delineated by low-managed hedgerows with few hedgerow trees. This description understates the general attractiveness of this gently rolling farmland, and there is no urban expression to erode this deeply rural character. Thus this wider area is graded HIGH sensitivity, other than the farmland that extends to the north of Yeovil Marsh where field enlargement, and the straightening of the local watercourse has lead to a loss of specimen trees and hedgerows, to thus be considered MODERATE sensitivity.

2) This site projects a rural character, and lays within land demonstrating a rural landcover, the surround being primarily agricultural, and the site physically divorced from the urban form of Yeovil, that lays at and beyond the head of the scarp, 1km distant. The landscape impacts are likely to be;

(i) general character – the study area lays divorced from the urban edge, and aside from the presence of the A37 road corridor, expresses a strong rural character. Here, the potential introduction of built form will bring about a moderate-large magnitude of change, inclusive of its effect upon the Yeovil Marsh hamlet, where the potential scale of change will dominate the existing hamlet, for the effect of development upon general character to be viewed as HIGH significance.

(ii) site features – the study area has few significant landscape features, other than the retained hedge-lines that delineate some of the smaller fields; and the tree lines that follow the ‘unimproved’ lengths of the local brooks. With many of the fields enlarged by hedge removal, the capacity to accommodate built form in such areas could be achieved without too great a landscape effect.
(iii) distinctive features – the main feature of the site lays to the south, being Yeovil’s northern escarpment. This study area has the capacity to avoid the lower slopes of the scarp, for there to be a small magnitude of change, for the effect to be considered LOW.

In summary, the major landscape effects are considered to be that of the fundamental change from a rural to urban character within a rural context; and potential impacts upon the areas more robust and traditional hedgerows and tree lines.

5E.3 Visual amenity

1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.6) broadly corresponds to the catchment of the Oakley Brook, being contained around its southward side by the Yeovil northern escarpment, which swings west from Mudford, following the ridge of the escarpment above the site, onto Chilthorne Domer in the west. To the north, the extent of the visual envelope follows the low hills south of Ashington and Limington, but becomes less emphatic to the northwest, where the valley opens toward the Ilchester plain, to enable longer low-trajectory views toward the site from land south of Ilchester, to potentially include the Leland Trail regional path. Due to the general low-laying ground in this quarter, views will be partial at best.

2) It is noted that:
   • The main public view of the site is gained from the head and northern face of the Yeovil northern escarpment.
   • The character of the study area is predominantly rural, and has minimal visual correspondence with the urban form of Yeovil.
   • The general area of the site laying over the valley floor is visually unobtrusive, and;
   • The steep sides of the escarpment are the most prominent landscape features of the land abutting the site.

2) The restrained visual envelope associated with this area ensures public perception is limited to local view only. Within this area, the following sensitive receptors are noted;
Yeovil Marsh hamlet
The Monarchs Way

(i) Yeovil Marsh lays outside Yeovil’s setting, and at the edge of the clay vale. It is rural in character, with much of its surround in agricultural use. It lays within the study area. The introduction of built form raises the potential of complete envelopment of the hamlet. This would be result in a very high magnitude of change, for the subsequent likely visual effect to be evaluated as being of SUBSTANTIAL significance.

(ii) The Monarchs Way regional trail follows the route of Stone Lane, which falls north off the Yeovil north escarpment. Whilst initially on elevated land, much of this length of the trail is within a sunken lane, with little prospect of the site. Toward the toe of the scarp, the trail has a clearer view of the site, though here visibility is primarily low-trajectory, and broken by intervening tree- and hedge- lines. Consequently, the magnitude of change is considered to be low-moderate, for the significance of the visual effect to be considered MODERATE at most.
**5E.4 Adjacent townscape**
There is no immediate relationship between this site and Yeovil’s urban form, the prime link being the dualled form of the A37 linking Yeovil with Ilchester and the A303. Singular lines of 20th century residential form facing onto Combe street lane form the town’s edge 0.8km to the south, which broadly correlates with the head of the southern escarpment. The intervening ground comprises the north-facing folding escarpment, incised by tree-lined combes formed by swift flowing streams, whilst the slopes are overlain by small – mid scale hedge-lined field pattern of mixed agricultural use, and minimal development.

**5E.5 Green Infrastructure**
The main contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site are the stream corridors that run south-north through the site, and the better hedgerows and specimen trees.

**5E.6 Other constraints**
No major physical constraints are noted.

**5E.7 Summary of landscape and visual effects, and the potential for mitigation/assimilation**

1) Two major significant effects are noted, being (i) the fundamental change from a rural to urban character, and (ii) the substantial visual effect arising from the potential containment of the hamlet of Yeovil Marsh by new urban form. There are also the potential effects of development impact upon the area’s more robust and traditional hedgerows and tree lines.

2) Landscape and visual effects of this magnitude are difficult to counteract. Development around Yeovil Marsh would likely result in the risk of the hamlet’s complete loss of identity. There are mitigation approaches that can limit the extent of the potential impact, but only to a degree. These can include (a) an open-space link to the escarpment, enabling visual correspondence to be maintained; and (b) green corridors being maintained along green lanes and brook courses, running north toward the vale. Such mitigation can lessen the overall significance of the effect, but it would likely remain high. Similarly, even with a potential 40% open space to call upon, credible mitigation is difficult to achieve where there is little natural containment of the site, requiring a reliance upon buffer planting to limit perception of the site, and create a degree of assimilation.

**5E.8 Development potential**
The extent of detachment of this rural site from the town does not enable built expression to read as an urban extension, but as a satellite settlement. If this approach is considered acceptable, then some potential to mitigate landscape and visual impact as described above can suggest a potential development site to be defined within this area as fig 1.12 – appendix. A mitigation-lead approach suggests a potential built development area circa 45 ha. primarily in two blocks north of the hamlet. This represents a candidate for either a reduced single-site option, or a contributor to a multi-site option. However, it is not considered a credible option in landscape terms, for whilst the land lays at a low elevation, it is quite clearly divorced from the town and its topographic setting, and would introduce urban expression into a large rural area, wholly at variance with the character of the wider landscape of both the northern escarpment and central plain.
5F.1 Location
This area abuts Yeovil’s northwest edge, running west from Thorne Lane alongside the Lufton Industrial Estate, to include Lufton hamlet. The A3088 Cartgate link forms the southwest boundary whilst the northern extent is defined by the Yeovil-Tintinhull Road. Its western boundary follows field hedgelines between Windmill and Axeclose Farms, whilst the eastern boundary runs south from the junction of Tintinhull Road and Lower Vagg Lane, following the toe of the scarp before swinging south of Thorne Coffin to return to Thorne Lane.

5F.2 Landscape character

1) This area is a combination of two local landscape areas identified by the PLS, the low ridge and scarp extending between Thorne Coffin and Lufton hill laying within the Yeovil Northern Escarpment area, whilst the lower laying land below this ridge is indicated as the Balls Water Headwaters. The Thorne-Lufton length of the scarp is less pronounced than the main face above Yeovil, and toward Lufton Hill the field pattern is in greater evidence, due to a loss of tree cover, and unsympathetic management of hedgerows. It has little of the diversity of landscape elements of the greater part of the scarp, and is predominantly considered to be of MODERATE sensitivity, other than a discrete area of traditional fields, robust and undisturbed field pattern, and specimen hedgerow trees in and below Lufton Hill that like the main scarp, is evaluated as HIGH sensitivity.

2) The headwaters of Ball’s Water lay between Windmill Hill, and the northern escarpment by Thorne Coffin, and drain southwards from Chilthorne Domer. The stream and feeder brooks are evident from associated alder and willow stands, and the pattern of drainage has determined fields of irregular size and scale, that are predominantly hedge-lined. Whilst the character of this area is understated, it is intact and free from urban form and is thus graded HIGH sensitivity. Isolated pockets of incongruous development-scale disrupt this character, by Axeclose Farm, as do fields enlarged through hedge removal, and with the consequent loss of hedgerow trees, these occur as out-scaled islands within the wider study area, to thus be considered MODERATE sensitivity.

3) The introduction of development form into this area would clearly impact upon its strong rural character, for whilst there is a correspondence of urban form and the study area at the edge of Thorne Lane, the developed edge of Yeovil is barely apparent, contained to the south of the north escarpment head. The remainder of the site is clearly rural, and in agricultural use. Thus the main impacts that would arise from development upon this landscape are likely to be:

(i) general character – This site expresses a strong rural character, with little relationship with the urban edge of Yeovil, abutting the town only along a short length of Thorne Lane, where employment buildings lay adjacent the low ridge to the north. As has been noted earlier, the introduction of built form will bring about a magnitude of change that will increase in amount as it spreads away from the urban edge toward those rural areas that present a rich and distinctive rural character, free from urban elements. Hence whilst the potential magnitude of change is low adjacent Thorne Lane, this rapidly rises to a high magnitude of
change throughout the wider area, particularly the low laying meadows adjacent Balls Water and its tributaries; and the tree-lines and plantations associated with the internal valleys, particularly below Thorne Coffin and Lufton hamlets; and the intricate network of small fields dotted throughout the study area. In such locations, a high magnitude of change would result from development, leading to a landscape effect of SUBSTANTIAL significance.

(ii) site features – the main landscape features of this site that contribute to local character, are traditional hedgerows that demarcate the fields, many of which are anciently enclosed; the rough grassland that lays in most part alongside the course of the site’s streams; and blocks of woody vegetation. Small orchards and paddocks are a particular characteristic of Lufton hamlet. Some fields within the western half of the study area are noted as having been subject of enlargement due to hedge removal, to thus have a capacity to accommodate built form without too great a change to the landscape resource. However, the more intricate field patterns are less able to accommodate a large scale of development, and are thus deemed vulnerable to development impact.

(iii) distinctive elements –
The general character of this area is understated, hence there are no specific features that can be noted as distinctive. What is notable is the sense of separation of this area from urban influence, and in that respect, it is the ridge that runs around Thorne Coffin and projects toward Lufton Hill, which can be highlighted as the element that enables the main part of the study area to retain a strong rural character. It is noted that this ridge also provides a buffer between Yeovil’s edge and Thorne Coffin, hence this ridge and scarp area is considered vulnerable to a high magnitude of change should development spread across it, to potentially create a landscape effect that would be evaluated as HIGH significance.

In summary, the potential major effects arising from development impact are considered to be those of (i) change upon the general rural character of the area; (ii) the vulnerability of the containing ridge to the southeast to development; (iii) the accommodation of urban form within the narrow combs and traditional field patterns within the site, and (iv) the conservation of the site’s treelines; plantations and the area’s more robust hedgerows.

5F.3 Visual amenity

1) A theoretical zone of visual influence (ZVI) has been assessed for this site, to identify the extent to which this proposal will be visible from surrounding areas. It indicates that the prime visual envelope of the site (figure 1.7) is relatively well contained, with most receptors within 4 km of the area. The visual envelope of the site is closely contained by the built form of Yeovil’s edge to the east. To the south it extends from high ground around Ocombe, to run along the broad shoulder of land west from Ocombe toward Ham hill, whilst to the northwest it is closely delineated by the low rise of Windmill Hill, linking to the low limestone ridge between Chilthorne Domer and Tintinhull to the north.

2) It can be noted that;
• The south and east part of the study area is locally prominent, by virtue of its elevated position on the upper slopes and shoulder of land to the west of Thorne Coffin. Conversely, the area around Lufton Manor is visually discreet, whilst the general area of the valley floor associated with Balls Water is unobtrusive.
Peripheral landscape study – Yeovil (addendum)

- The site is perceived as laying beyond the main setting of the town.
- Only to the east of Lufton Manor, and by eastern length of Thorne Lane, is there a visual relationship with urban form, in the guise of employment buildings.
- The main vantage points looking toward this site lay to the north; west and southwest. There is little perception of the area from the urban edge.

3) A review of the visual envelope associated with this area finds that public perception of the whole of the study area is primarily limited to local view. Within this area, the following sensitive receptors are noted:

Montacute House and HP&G
St Michaels Hill SAM
Ham Hill SAM
The Leland and Monarchs Way regional trails
Thorne Coffin, including grade 2* listed St Andrews Church
Lufton hamlet
Housing at the edge of Chilthorne Domer

It is noted that the ZVIs for this site, and the study area A (Brympton) indicate a theoretical potential for cumulative impact of development of areas A and F upon views from Odcombe, which is also considered below.

(i) High profile views out from Montacute House (notably from its 3rd floor long gallery) and its HP&G, offer a near 360 degree prospect of the surrounding countryside, though it is primarily the viewing tower at the head of St Michaels Hill, from which much of the study area can be seen and to a lesser degree, from the northeast corner of the park. From these locations, views are available into the study area, where the most notable features are those of Lufton Hill in the foreground, and the hillsides around Thorne Coffin. It is also noted that the specimen trees and shelterbelts adjacent Lufton Manor provide clear separation of the built form of the employment area, and the countryside surround. With these closer areas currently free from built form, and integral to the setting of the HP&G, the likely magnitude of change arising from development is likely to be high, with the subsequent visual effect evaluated as SUBSTANTIAL.

(ii) As noted above – from the head of the hill, the majority of the study area is visible, and its rural character is strongly expressed. Where potential development might be seen to be tucked against the current edge of Yeovil, then this would be of LOW significance, but large scale extension into the wider area would be of substantive magnitude, for visual effect again to be assessed as SUBSTANTIAL.

(iii) From the north and east edge of Ham Hill, views into the site are comparable to St Michaels Hill, but reduced by distance, and a smaller part of a wider panorama. Thus the above values are proportionately reduced for effects to be considered MODERATE.

(iv) The Leland Trail and Monarchs Way regional trails follows a route across Windmill Hill, and for part of its length directly overlook the study area. Looking east from the trail, the prospect is of the immediate enclosed valley with the hills rising on the far side of the vale to provide enclosure and separation from Yeovil, the latter of which is noticeable by the head of
the employment buildings projecting above the trees. The local prominence of the hills and scale of the farmland is more apparent in these views. Should development occur throughout the study area, which would represent a high magnitude of change, the likely significance of the visual effect would be HIGH, primarily due to the potential for massing effects over the hillsides, and the forward projection of built form into and across the valley.

(v) Much of the housing within Thorne Coffin has little immediate perception of the study area, due to its enclosed valley location, other than a prospect of the upper hillsides that run southwest of the hamlet. The introduction of development on this hillside would represent a high magnitude of change, due to its close proximity, and elevated position. The potential dominance of built form would inform a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect.

(vi) Lufton hamlet similarly lays in close proximity to the study area, and at a lower elevation. Whilst much of the study area has little visual correspondence with the hamlet, due to the intervening form of Lufton Hill, that part of the hill that rises from the hamlet’s location is in a dominant relationship, for the introduction of built form to represent a high magnitude of change, though this is tempered by the filtered presence of the consented Lufton development site, and the adjacent employment buildings seen through the trees to the east and southeast, to thus endow an urban edge character, to suggest the likelihood of a MODERATE visual effect, rising to HIGH should development extend to the hamlet.

(vii) The greater part of Chilthorne Domer falls to the north, away from the study area, which in turn falls gently south from the village’ south edge toward the internal valley that comprises the majority of the study area. From the village edge, views overlook the site, toward the hills to the south. The likely magnitude of change arising from development within the study area, would be low where distant, but rising to high where in close proximity with the receptor, to be considered a SUBSTANTIAL visual effect only along the north edge of the site.

(viii) The theoretical potential for a substantive cumulative effect arising from a potential development footprint within study areas A and F is indicated for Odcombe as a general receptor. It is noted however, that views over both sites are limited, and no sensitive receptors have been identified within the village that have a direct prospect of both sites, once potential development areas have been identified and defined, and mitigation measures factored in. Hence the significance of cumulative visual effects is considered to be NEGLIGIBLE.

In summary, likely significant visual effects arising from development impact would occur should development lay in close proximity to the hillsides above Thorne Coffin and Lufton, and at the north edge of the site, by Chilthorne Domer. Massing effects are potentially significant when viewed from sensitive receptors to west and south, and the forward development of Yeovil beyond containing elements of woodland and hilltops could significantly impact upon Montacute House and its historic park and garden, inclusive of St Michaels Hill.
5F.4 Adjacent townscape

1) The study area adjoins the town’s northwest edge, which is characterised primarily by commercial and retail estates; and two planned residential areas that have the benefit of planning consent, but are not yet commenced – circa 800 homes at Brimsmore to the east, and 700 homes at Lufton to the south.

2) A large employment area within Brympton parish backs onto Thorne Lane and the grounds of Lufton Manor, the bounding vegetation of which delineate the general face of town and countryside. This estate lays toward the head of the northern escarpment, and is made-up of both mid- and large-scale modern buildings, functional and block-like in form, two of which punctuate the skyline due to their increased height and mass. Whilst in a mix of architectural styles, metal sheeting is the prime cladding material, of pale grey hues. Tree and hedge lines define and contain the site. There is no direct vehicular access to the study area, but linkage via Western Avenue and Thorne Lane provides limited thoroughfare.

3) The proposed residential area of Brimsmore to the east of Thorne Coffin will abut the study area over the width of a single field only, with the immediate boundary of the Brimsmore site characterised by an area of (community) woodland planting providing informal public access and habitat enhancement, and designed to assist visual containment of the site. To the south of Lufton Manor, the Lufton residential site will similarly face the study area across a corridor of open space, divided by the Lufton Stream, but linked via the narrow form of Lufton Lane. The line of the A3088 forms the southern boundary in most part, but does not link directly to the study area.

5F.5 Green Infrastructure
The study area drains to the west, hence it is the corridors associated with the Lufton brook and Balls Water that are the prime potential contributing elements to GI within and adjacent the site. The centre of the site lays at a level elevation, within which headwater brooks drain into Balls Water at close interval, suggesting potential for multi-functional open space. Hedgelines within this area are vestiges of anciently enclosed land, and would contribute to a potential GI framework, whilst the field occupying the site of the Roman villa in the centre of the site may similarly offer potential. The open farmland at the site’s east edge links with the proposed recreational space of the Brimsmore community woodland, to suggest an extension of community open space.

5F.6 Other constraints
The setting of Lufton Roman Villa, near the centre of the study area, will inform the development capacity of the site, as will the settings of Montacute House and its HP&G (defined by a setting study commissioned by the National Trust 2009); the scheduled ancient monuments of Ham Hill and St. Michaels Hill; Thorne Coffin conservation area; and a number of listed buildings adjacent the site. All will likely require commensurate separation of built form from these heritage assets, according to their location; use, and history. There is an area associated with Balls Water that is associated with flooding, whilst the steep slopes of Lufton Hill and the escarpment adjacent Thorne Coffin will preclude built development.
5F.7 Summary of landscape and visual effects, and potential for mitigation/assimilation

1) The significant landscape and visual effects that potentially could occur within this study area are those of (i) potential built form against the village edges; in relation to heritage assets and their settings; and lengths of local regional trails. (ii) Local ridge lines and hillsides are noted as sensitive to development, particularly above Thorne Coffin and Lufton hamlet, whilst the (iii) potential for massing on rising ground has significance when viewed from lower elevation, or across the valley. The (iv) conservation of meadow pasture, specimen trees and tree-lines; and the area’s more robust and intricate hedgerow networks is necessary to retain local landscape character, the impact arising from the removal of any of these features has the capacity to be adverse.

2) Reviewing the range of potential impacts within this area, suggests a need for mitigation by strategies of reduction, and remediation, and with some potential for enhancement. By reduction, development can be precluded from the close vicinity of Lufton; Thorne Coffin; and the southern edge of Chilthorne Domer, and a suitable limit set on potential proximity to enable potentially significant adverse effects to be reduced to low and moderate-low. A limit to growth in these areas can be defined based upon setting studies relative to these settlements. Similarly, sensitivities identified in the existing setting assessments of Montacute HP&G and Thorne Coffin conservation area will inform an acceptable extent of growth in the vicinity of these heritage assets, as will be required for the Roman villa at Lufton. Skylines above Lufton hamlet and Thorne Coffin should remain free of built development to avoid an adverse effect of development.

3) Retention of mature tree lines and the site’s older and more robust hedgerows would help to provide a framework for development form, whilst the stream corridors draining back to the southwest edge of the site from Thorne Coffin, the edge of Chilthorne Domer, and Lufton hamlet, offers the opportunity to create green infrastructure links through potential development areas. These features can be enhanced by open space and tree planting to link with existing landscape features, to positively use part of the 40% allocation of green space within urban form. This also reduces the potential for massing effects to occur.

4) Further allocation of open space can be utilised to intervene between potential development and sensitive areas, namely the ridge and hillsides that lay above, and separate Thorne Coffin and Lufton, and south of Chilthorne Domer. The potential for multi-functional open space within a woodland setting is possible, by GI linkage between the plantations around Lufton Manor, and the Brimsmore development site. This offers both recreational and biodiversity benefit, and provides a common face to the study area, with the existing townscape.

5) Visual effects were noted as likely to be substantially significant on the hillsides facing lengths of the national trails, and Montacute House and HP&G. In addition to moving the face of development back from these receptors, there is also potential to reduce these effects to moderate/low by breaking up development areas to avoid the steeper slopes, and creating separation by incorporation of open space and tree planting within such areas, tied back into the main GI framework.
5F.8 Development potential

The degree of detachment of this predominantly rural site from the town does not enable built expression to read as an urban extension, particularly as the one area of potential linkage is also identified as sufficiently sensitive for development to be excluded. This shifts the potential development footprint west and north, away from the urban edge, to provide some potential to mitigate significant landscape and visual effects as outlined above, to enable a potential development site within this area to be identified. A mitigation-lead approach then indicates a potential built development area circa 40 ha. This represents a candidate for either a reduced single-site option, or a contributor to a multi-site option. It is not however, favoured in landscape terms, for whilst the potential development land lays at relatively low elevation, it is clearly divorced from the town, and lays outside its topographic setting, and would introduce urban expression into a large rural area, wholly at variance with the character of the wider landscape of the headwater valley, and in the correspondence of the area to the sensitive receptors of Montacute HP&G and Ham Hill SAM.
6. Summary

6.1 This study has undertaken a supplementary landscape evaluation of six greenfield areas at the margins of Yeovil, with the prime aims of;
(i) identifying potential development areas, with emphasis upon a potential site with the landscape capacity to accommodate 2500 dwellings, 1565 of which would be delivered within the plan period (and as a total figure should a multi-site area be pursued) and;
(ii) reviewing the potential of mitigation to assist assimilation of built form into its landscape and adjacent townscape context.

6.2 The study progressed by reviewing the mitigation strategies available to assist site selection (section 2) then utilising an initial step of avoidance of the most sensitive areas – (a) the northern escarpment, and (b) the southeast incised valleys – to identify six study areas. These study areas were then reviewed, in which the extent of likely landscape and visual effects potentially arising from development impact upon the area and its close surrounds was assessed, to enable a range of mitigation approaches to be identified that would have a capacity to moderate the resultant effects. Whilst the impacts of development of this scale could be considerable, potential areas of development have been identified that are informed by a capacity for mitigation, to enable the sites to be better assimilated into their wider landscape context, inclusive of the corresponding town edge.

6.3 As an outcome to this study, it has been found that in landscape terms;
(i) Land to the east of Brympton d’Evercy (area A) is identified as sharing the same topographical setting as Yeovil. Major constraints limit development potential, but mitigation that is sensitive to the setting of Brympton d’Evercy has enabled identification of an area circa 15ha of potential built development, to make a small-scale contribution toward a multi-site option.

(ii) Land to the south of Yeovil (area B) within the Coker dip-slope local landscape area (LLCA) offers the potential of a single site option, or if reduced in scale, a capacity to contribute toward a multi-site option. Mitigation approaches would primarily address separation from the Coker parish settlements and historic assets; the break-up of potential development mass utilising open space/GI linkage; creation of sympathetic edge-treatments; and utilisation of local landscape characteristics to assist site assimilation.

(iii) Land within the Middle Yeo valley/Dorset hillsides LLCA (area C) is identified as sharing the same geographical setting as Yeovil, and offers a capacity for a reduced single-site option circa 45ha made-up of 3 areas of built development, or the potential to contribute toward a multi-site option. Suitable mitigation would ensure development is steered away from sensitive skylines and upper slopes, to reduce significant visual effects.

(iv) Land above Up Mudford (area D) is indicated as having a capacity to provide a potential built development area approaching 45 ha suggesting this could either be a reduced single-site option, or a contributor to a multi-site proposal. Mitigation would primarily address separation from local rural settlements; an absence of development from sensitive lengths of skyline and upper scarp slopes; and robust structural landscape treatment of a potential
development edge. The sensitivity of the skyline and upper scarp as viewed from the wider Vale to the northeast is a notable concern.

(v) Finally, two sites at (a) Yeovil Marsh – area E; and (b) N&W of Lufton – area F; have been assessed as theoretically offering potential development areas of 45 and 40ha respectively. However, neither is favoured in landscape terms:

(a) the likely landscape and visual effects of development impact upon Yeovil Marsh would be substantially adverse, and difficult to mitigate, and it is quite clearly divorced from the town and its topographic setting, to be wholly at variance with the character of its wider landscape context.

(b) Land N&W of Lufton already has a degree of detachment from Yeovil’s edge, and the application of mitigation strategies to this site, to protect local settlements and the settings of historic assets, would further detach a potential development area from the town, enabling linkage only by Green Infrastructure. In being divorced from the town, and laying outside its setting, development in this zone would introduce urban expression into a large rural area, wholly at variance with the character of the wider landscape. With both sites, the application of mitigation does not satisfactorily address the landscape and visual effects arising from the introduction of substantive and detached urban form within these distinct rural areas, thus these study areas are not recommended for urban growth.

6.4 With the application of landscape mitigation strategies, sites within the study areas A – D are therefore recommended as having a capacity for providing either a single- or multi-site development option, as evaluated in landscape and visual terms.
ADDENDUM:
YEovil PErIPHERAL LANDSCAPE STUDY

Appendices:

Fig 1.1  Study areas
Fig 1.2 – 1.7  Prime visual envelopes
Figs 1.8 – 11.13  potential development areas

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Appendices:

Figs 1.8 – 11.13 potential development areas

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Key to Figures 1.8 -1.13

- Study Area
- Development Areas
- Key Sites
- National Wildlife/Geological Sites
- Local Wildlife/Geological Sites
- Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 3
- Historic Parks & Gardens
- Conservation Area
- Archaeological Sites of National Importance
- Principle listed buildings

The above categories as defined in the South Somerset Local Plan

- Steep gradient

Outline findings arising from mitigation/assimilation evaluation

- Prime existing Green Infrastructure (GI)
- Potential additional GI
- Suggested limit to built development due to setting constraints
ADDENDUM:
YELOVL PERIPHERAL LANDSCAPE STUDY

Photos
(additional to photos 1-18 of the Yeovil Peripheral study)
Site (A) – Brympton d’Evelcy – looking north over the site from Camp Road/A30 junction
Site (B) – Coker dip-slope – looking north from the public right of way at Darvole

Site (C) - Middle Yeo & Dorset Hillsides - looking northeast from the southern edge of the site (Compton Road)
Site (D) – Up Mudford - looking toward the Up Mudford study area from the Monarchs Way, by Church Farm, Trent
(Site E) – Yeovil Marsh - looking north over the hamlet of Yeovil Marsh

(Site F) – Land N & W of Lufton - Looking east from the Monarchs Way, Windmill Farm, toward Thorne Coffin and Yeovil